

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP



A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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COLLECTING OUR FAVORITES

By E. T. Gossett

Cerro Gordo, Illinois

It is with the writer, as it appears to be with every collector of ancient literature, that each has his particular favorite. One is interested only in certain story papers or libraries, while another wants only stories by certain authors. Whatever paper or library they were most familiar with during their reading days, are the ones they are now seeking. Or perhaps there was some incident connected with a certain publication or story, which endears it to them, and creates the desire to once again see and read that publication which so impressed them in their formative years.

Born in 1875, the writer's reading days started about 1885, and it is those publications printed between then and about 1900 which are the most interesting to him. I remember distinctly the first library I ever purchased, although I had read quite a few previously, loaned me by the older boys. But the first one purchased by myself, and the incidents connected with its purchase remains fresh in my memory at this date, though it has been more than fifty years ago. The library was No. 384 of the Beadle's Half-Dime Library, "Whip King Joe, the Boy Ranchero," by Oll Coomes. At the risk of boring the readers of the Roundup, I will here relate the incidents attending the purchase of it.

It was when I was about ten years of age. In those days every housewife did the family wash on Monday morning, and there seemed to be a rivalry

among them to see who could get her clothes "on the line" first. I remember the women used to make disparaging remarks about some neighbors who never got their clothes out until noon or after, and they were considered lazy or something.

Well, one Monday morning my mother discovered she was out of laundry soap and she sent me up town to get a supply, and I was told to "hurry back," so that by the time she had the water hot and the clothes ready, she would have a supply.

On the way up town, I had to pass a place where they had just built a new house, and a man was out behind the house, slacking lime in some mortar boxes. Of course, boy-like, I had to stop and look on for a while. The man was pumping water into a tank, and he noticed me and asked me if I wanted to make a nickel. I assured him that I was in a receptive mood for any proposition of that sort, or other words to that effect. He said that if I would pump that tank full of water he'd give me a nickel.

Forgetting for a nonce the rush errand I was supposed to be on, I blithely started in to fill that tank. However, I soon found that there were a few serious handicaps to the proposition. The pump had asthma, I think, for it wheezed, creaked and groaned, but only a small dribble of water resulted. To add to the difficulties, the man commenced dipping the water out of the tank with a bucket, pouring it into the slacking boxes, faster than I could pump it up, so for quite a while I didn't even hold my own. Luckily, however, he finally got all the water he wanted, and the surface

of the water in the tank began to slowly rise. Finally, either because he thought there was enough water, or else taking pity on me, he told me, "That will do!" and gave me the nickel.

Finishing my trip to the business section of the town, I studied the proposition over, to decide what I would buy with that hard-earned nickel. By the time I reached the business section, I had decided that I would buy a novel with it, so went to the newsstand in one corner of the postoffice, to look them over.

They happened to have quite a stock on hand, and, of course, I had to look them all over, being that I was a customer with money. I looked at the illustrations, read the titles and the lines printed beneath each picture. Whenever I came to one that I thought would be particularly interesting, I laid it aside, until I had gone through the whole stack. Then I started through the ones I had laid aside, eliminating some more, until finally I had gotten my selection narrowed down to one novel "Whip King Joe." Then I remembered that I had been told to "hurry back," and that the family wash was probably being help up, pending my arrival, so I hastily secured the soap and hurried homeward.

Time had passed, as it always does, and I guess it was about the middle of the forenoon when I finally arrived home. Some of the neighbor women were already putting up the sheets and pillow cases on their lines, but not at our house. I realized then that I was due for a tanning, and sure enough there was a nice, springy willow switch, attached to my mother's right hand, awaiting me.

The coincidence of the title of the story I bought and what I got for earning it, never occurred to me at the time, but long afterwards I remembered it, and have thought of it many times since, when I happen to call to mind my early experience with dime novels.

A STORY OF INDIA

By Harold C. Holmes

Many years ago a young Englishman took his bride to India where he engaged in a business enterprise which grew and expanded until he

became a man of wealth. One son was born to them whom they named Robert. But from the day of Robert's birth the young wife was never well and when he was but a few years old she passed away. This loss brought the father and son together in a bond of love even stronger than between many fathers and their sons. Robert was always of a studious nature and as he grew older and developed, his desire to be a doctor was formed and grew in strength as he grew in years. Although the father would have liked to see his son take over the family business when he arrived at maturity yet he did not oppose this idea of his being a doctor and after the necessary schooling in India the father took Robert with him to England and he was entered in one of the foremost medical schools there.

The boy though a true Britain had lived all his life in a Colony and found it had to mix with the young men he found in the school. So he put all his energy into his studies and though it put him at the top of his classes yet it was his final undoing as after he had studied several years and was within a few months of his degree his health broke completely and he was told he had no choice. Get out of England and back to India with its milder climate or die. Faced with that choice there is only one answer and a week later finds him on ship-board bound home. On board this ship before he reaches home he receives a cable from his father's lawyers in India with news which indeed ended all the world which he had known before. His father was dead. Overwork and worry and the reason for the worry was soon apparent. His father's business had struck evil days and after the affairs were settled he was left with but a few dollars.

Not being able longer to bear the scenes of his childhood, with the few dollars he had left he went to a large seaport city in India and there instead of taking to drugs or drink to forget, he worked with no thought for anything else, but work. Took the first thing he could get which was a porter in a big hotel. But this intense application to his work brought its own reward and in the succeeding years he rose from one position to another and accumulated more and more money until he means of his

own money and that of certain associates whom he interested, he built the finest hotel in all that city and was the managing director of it. This magnificent hotel became almost his god and no effort of his was too great for him to give up to this fine enterprise.

For the time we will now leave Robert and take up another family, also English, who came to India. It consisted of a man and his wife and soon a daughter named Mary. They were located far in the interior of India where the father was in the employ of an English trading firm. He was direct contact man with the natives there. He contracted an illness and died about the time that Robert had built his new hotel. The widow received a small pension from the firm her husband had devoted his life to, and they with a fine sense of justice for a faithful employee had cabled, that to Mary they would give a position in their London office and so with her salary and the mother's small pension, the spectre of want would be removed from their door.

So at the time of our story, the mother and Mary had disposed of their belongings in the little India town and had journeyed to a port on the river. A little steamer carried them that afternoon, all that night and all the next day and soon after the evening meal that night they tied up at a dock in the seaport town in which was the hotel, built by Robert. They disembarked and calling one of the taxis in the waiting line they asked to be driven to this hotel. Arriving there Mary paid the driver and two porters carried their bags up the stairs, into the hotel and up to the desk.

It so happened that just at that moment the desk clerk had left the desk and Robert himself was the one who greeted Mary and her mother. He looked at each of them and gave them a welcoming smile and turned the register around and Mary registered her name and under that the name of her mother. Robert assigned them to connecting rooms and then called a bell boy who took their bags and conducted them to the elevator. They were carried up to their floor and the mother was shown into one room and Mary into the other and the connecting door was thrown open between

them. The boy was tipped and he left. The mother came into Mary's room and they chatted a little while. They were both so pleased with the rooms they seemed so cheerful. Both were furnished just alike. They remarked how cheerful it looked as everything was furnished in a light color. The wall paper was light with a floral design, the rug likewise and all the furniture was light colored. The mother soon went to her own room to retire and Mary said good night to her, closed the connecting door but did not lock it. Then Mary disrobed, retired and almost at once dropped into a sound sleep.

It seemed but a minute, but a whole night had gone when Mary opened her eyes again. Sunshine was already pouring into the room. She lay quiet for the moment with her thoughts busy with the unknown life to come in England. Her eyes from the position she was in naturally looked at the ceiling and part of one wall of the room and gradually as she began to really see what her eyes were looking at, she began to be conscious that things did not seem as they had been. She remembered that she and her mother had remarked how pretty the light wall paper was and yet the wall paper she was looking at now was of a very dark shade of brown. She shifted her position until she could see the furniture in the room and this was now made of walnut or some other wood almost black in color. Her clothing and bag were in the position she had left them in but even the rug seemed different being of a very dark pattern.

Mary hurriedly rose and going to the connecting door tapped on it and softly called her mother's name. No answer. Mary then tried the door and to her surprise found it locked. She began to get alarmed and rapping louder, it still brought no answer from her mother. Fear began to take hold of her and she now pounded wildly on the door and screamed to her mother but no answer at all was received. In a frenzy she rushed to the phone and called up the desk down stairs and asked that the manager come to her room at once. In a moment there came a knock at her door and she opened it and Robert came in and shut the door after him.

Almost incoherent, Mary poured out

questions to him, "Why didn't her mother answer? Why did the room look different?" Robert tried to calm her and said that perhaps her journey had tired her too much and wanted to call the house physician for her. The following conversation took place—

"Where is my mother, I can't rouse her?"

"Your mother, I don't understand."

"Don't you remember, my mother and I came to the hotel and registered and you assigned us these two rooms."

"My dear young lady, you must be going to the hotel and remember assign-ill. I remember very well your coming you to this room but no one was with you. You were alone."

"How can you say such a thing. You assigned my mother to that adjoining room and now the connecting door is locked and I can get no answer from her. I demand you let me into that room."

"Most certainly you can see into the room but you are mistaken. That room was not occupied last night by anyone. It was vacant."

With that Robert took Mary to the hall door of the adjoining room and opening the door for her. Mary rushed in. But the room was not occupied. Her mother was not there nor were any of her clothes or her bag. The bed had not been used and the room was furnished in the same dark style as Mary's own room was. Mary now insisted the police be called. Robert called headquarters and soon two detectives arrived. The terrified girl told them her story. Robert repeated that the girl had arrived alone. Mary said that the hotel register and the bell boys would prove that her story was true. They all went to the hotel office and the detectives examined the register. It showed Mary's name only. Her mother's name was not there.

The bell boy that Mary pointed out was called for questioning.

"Do you remember this young lady?"

"Yes sir, I showed her up to her room last night."

"Who was with her?"

"No one sir, she was alone."

The same questions brought the same answers from the elevator operator and the porters who brought her bags in from the taxi in which Mary said she and her mother came from the boat. The detectives were about

to insist on Mary's examination by a doctor but to her pleading that they find her taxi driver they agreed and with her they drove to the steamship dock. Mary pointed out the driver of her taxi. The detectives questioned him.

"Do you remember this young lady?"

"Yes sir, I drove her from the boat to the hotel last night."

"Who was with her?"

"An older lady, sir."

"Did you see both of these ladies enter the hotel?"

"Yes sir. Porters took their bags and they both entered the hotel."

THE END

Well there you have it boys. A Story of India. Not original with me. Don't know where it came from. I heard it in this way. About fifteen years ago one winter noon at the office it was storming so hard that no one wished to go out. After lunch a half dozen of us were sitting around with an hour to kill. One of the fellows said he had heard a story the night before at a club he belonged to. He told the story as I have given it, my sole contribution being to dress it up a little. Since then I'll bet I have used this story fifty times and it has never failed to provide a bit of amusement so I pass it on to you hoping you too, can get enjoyment out of it. The way you work it is this: You tell the story then your listeners become the detectives who must solve the case. They do it by asking you questions to which you must answer truthfully but you can answer by only one of two words, either "yes" or "no." Any question which you cannot answer in this way you must make your questioner alter till it can be answered so. As I said I have used this story about 50 times and have never yet had the questioners fail to solve the case but often it has taken a full half hour. There are two parts to the answer: What happened and Why. Each of equal importance. If they solve one you should keep on till the other is also solved. Some questions they will ask have absolutely no bearing on the case. For example I was once asked if Mary was of a certain religious faith. If I answered "no" that would end it. If I answered "The question is irrelevant" that would end it. I answered "yes" and they went over the hurdles on a wild goose chase and

for five minutes hammered at the religious angle which has nothing to do with it. I finally referred to the question again and told them it was irrelevant which pulled them out of that hole.

This story I have given you might be rather out of place in the ROUNDUP if one couldn't give a definite tie-in with our hobby. But I am not stuck with that for I have just such a tie-in. Those of you who have a copy of this novel, read it and you will find the answer to my Story of India. The English publication UNION JACK No. 1140 published Aug. 18, 1925, titled THE ADVENTURE OF THE ENGINEER'S BLUE-PRINT. The two stories do not even faintly resemble each other but the final solution is practically identical. I heard the story ten years before I read this Union Jack so what a kick out of it I got when I read the final ending of that novel.

SOLUTION

It all really hinges on the fact that Robert studied to be a doctor. Mary and her mother entered the hotel and when they came to the desk to register, Robert saw that the mother showed unmistakable signs of the first stage of leprosy. To refuse them a room might bring on an argument with possible disclosure of the mother's condition which would bring quick and certain ruin to his hotel. A panic to desert the place would ensue among the guests. So he let them be taken to rooms. This put certain of his employees in the same hole he was in. Were it known they had had contact with a leper would bring long compulsory medical quarantine and they would be shunned by everybody. So Robert and the employees reasoned they would kill the mother but let the daughter live. Were they to kill them both, even though the bodies were disposed of, yet certain investigation of their disappearance would come sometime through their non-appearance in England at the firm the father had worked for. So to destroy the mother would forever remove any trace of the dread leprosy and they felt that the daughter's story would be thought a turn of a disordered mind and that they could get her put in an asylum. The solution is a bit far-fetched but at that hardly more so than some of the crimes you read of in the papers today. The mother was killed, the

body taken to the basement and together with her bag and clothing was burned in the garbage incinerator. This was so powerful that the body was entirely consumed. Then they drugged Mary, removed all furniture from the two rooms, rugs, etc., and burned them for fear of contagion. Refurnished the rooms, even to new paper on the walls. Restored Mary to her bed and replaced her bag and clothing where they had been. This part of the story is very far-fetched indeed but I think it is well to leave it in as it adds much to the mystery when the story is being told. This solution is practically the same as the Union Jack I spoke of though I believe the disease they used was the bubonic plague.

Mr. Ralph F. Cummings,
Publisher Roundup,
Fisherville, Mass.

Dear Sir:—

In sending in my dues for the second year of membership in the Happy Hour Brotherhood, it gives pleasure to state that I feel that I more than received my money's worth during the past year which I have been a member. I have bought some, sold some and made several nice trades with members of the Brotherhood, but most valuable, perhaps, in my estimation, is the pleasant contacts I have made among the members of the brotherhood. There are a lot of the boys who show a real spirit of cooperation, in furnishing a new beginner with information and in helping him to acquire the sort of a collection which his fancy dictates.

Using my experience of the past year, I would advise any one who is at all interested in collecting old libraries and story papers, to join the Brotherhood as a first step.

Yours sincerely,

E. T. GOSSETT, Cerro Gordo, Ill.

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NEWSY NEWS THAT'S ALL IN THE NEWS

Ye president of the Happy Hours Brotherhood has just returned from a three months' stay down in Philadelphia, where I have been a-nursing our brother member, Bro. Billee Benners. He's had a very tough time of it, this winter, and now on top of everything, he's lost the sight of his right eye. It's bad enough to lose other things, but to lose the eyesight is a terrible thing, especially if you lose the sight of both. I have seen so many, while down in Philadelphia that are on the street corners, begging, stone blind. Gives me the shivers to think about it.

Will tell you about my trip to Philadelphia this time: I left December 22, 1938, at midnight, for Philadelphia, and landed in New York the next morning at about 7 o'clock; wrote some cards out to some of my friends, and then went out to see our friend, Sidney Burton, up at 116 W. 53rd St., and had a little chat; bought a few novels. Then went to the Times Building, and met P. M. Gulick, who is a very nice sort of a fellow. Then I went to see Arvid Dahlstedt, but he had left for the hospital up at Suffern, N. Y., so I missed him. Then I went out to Brooklyn to see Fred Orphal, at 162 Remsen St., and had lunch with him, and quite a chat after lunch. Then I went to a couple of other places and then started for Philadelphia, and arrived that night; and then out to Billee's I went. Landed there safely, January 3rd. I called on Bro. Austin, and had a peek at his old timers.

January 6 I called to see Charles H. Taylor at his office, and made plans to visit his den at some other time. Went up to Mr. Austin's again January 19th, and then I went out to see Bob Smeltzer, and found him half sick, with cold, and his hands in very bad shape. So if you are wondering

why Bob doesn't write to you, you'll understand. I forget the date I was up to see him. Was out to see William Stappen, of 257 S. Tenth Street, and got him as a new member of the Brotherhood. He has a book store, so maybe he'll be having some of our wants at some time or other. Went down to see John T. McIntyre a couple of times, but never found him at home. March 4th I was up to visit Charlie Austin, as I couldn't keep away, for I had to have another look at those beauties, Ha! Ha!

March 12 I went up to see Charles M. Taylor, up to his novel den at 307 E. Gowen Ave., off of Germantown Ave., up in the 7400's. Gos! I thought I was never going to get there, as I went over to Camden, N. J., first, as I knew he used to live out that way, after a while, I got there, and "Oh, Boy!" what a nice collection he had. Yum, yum. Some day I'm going to write up an article on his collection. March 15th and 27th, I was up at Mr. Austin's again, and the last time, he was sick, when I was up there. Haven't heard how he is, lately.

I left Philadelphia at 8:30 for New York, and arrived at noon, went up to see Mr. Burton, then to the American Library Service, then to see James K. Knott, but found he had moved up to New Hampshire or Vermont. Also called on Eugene L. Schwaab, 220 W. 17th Street, but he happened to be out, so I took a run over to Brooklyn, to see Charlie Bragin, and what a collection he has, made me feel sick, to think what a small collection I had side of his. I think he has the best collection of colored covers I ever saw. I didn't have time to see all of his collection, but some day, I'll have to go, when I can spend the whole day over there, and then I'm sure I'll see something.

Then I left New York at midnight, Tuesday, 12 bells, for Massachusetts. Landed in Worcester, Mass., at a quarter to 7 Wednesday morning, and then got a New England Bus for home. Was home by 7:30. I wanted to call on Bro. Leithead, but didn't have time, better luck next time, Ned. Eli A. Messier, 117 Morton Ave., Woonsocket, R. I., was up to visit me last Sunday, April 2nd. We did a little trading, then he went home. So long fellows, my tale of woe, is ended. Reckless Ralph Cummings.

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